

Talking Points
Announcement of crime initiative
Monday, January 7, 2008

Introductions of participants

For some time now, work has been going on to develop a major, new law enforcement initiative to target “the worst of the worst” felony drug and violent gun offenders in Hinds County.

I am very pleased today to tell you that such an initiative is being launched with the involvement of the local, state and federal agencies.

The first purpose of state law enforcement is to support local law enforcement.

This initiative will help the Hinds County Sheriff’s Department and the City of Jackson’s Police Department fight crime by providing new support to all parts of the single largest city and county criminal justice system in Mississippi.

This is a \$3.5 million, two-year funding commitment that funds:

- a full-time-equivalent special Circuit Court judge;
- two new assistant district attorneys;
- one new public defender;
- additional support staff;
- A special investigations team comprised of law enforcement officers from the Mississippi Bureau of Narcotics, the Mississippi Bureau of Investigation, the Mississippi Department of Corrections, the Jackson Police Department, and the Hinds County Sheriff's Department.
- This effort will be coordinated with federal agencies, including the U.S. Attorney's Office, the Drug Enforcement Administration, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

- Funding is coming from federal law enforcement grants made available after Hurricane Katrina; this initiative will not require an additional appropriation by the State Legislature.

This new initiative also complements laws I requested that were enacted by the 2007 Legislature to toughen penalties against felons having guns or using them in commission of a crime.

One of the new laws increased the statutory maximum penalty to up to 10 years for previously convicted felons found in possession of a firearm. The old statutory maximum sentence was up to three years. Another new law increased the statutory penalty to 10 years for a previously convicted felon who uses a firearm during the commission of any felony.

Every citizen of our state has an interest in having a safe and secure Capital City. By working together, this initiative will bring new resources in identifying, prosecuting, convicting, and removing the worst criminal offenders from the streets.

(CALL ON JUSTICE SMITH FOR COMMENTS.)